

University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center

Nation's Busiest Veterinary Teaching Hospital Improves Staff Communication, Safety, and Mobility

The University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center is one of the nation's busiest veterinary teaching hospitals, treating more than 40,000 companion and 4,000 large animal cases annually. With 16 specialty areas, state-of-the-art equipment, and 24/7 availability, the Veterinary Medical Center offers a full-service care center for pets, horses, and farm animals.

Identifying a Wi-Fi Communication Solution

A progressive veterinary teaching hospital, the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center is always looking for innovative ways to improve operational efficiencies and animal care. In fact, the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center is the first veterinarian teaching hospital to use Vocera technology. Hospital leaders collaborated with another university department to purchase and expand the Vocera system. The Residential Life department on campus faced similar staff communication challenges caused by steel and concrete infrastructures that made it difficult for staff to connect on cellular devices. In 2015, the facilities coordinator at The University of Minnesota saw the wearable, voice-activated Vocera® Communication Badge in action at a local hospital where his wife was giving birth to their first child. He knew the hands-free communication solution that ran on Wi-Fi was exactly what he and his team needed to improve staff connectivity and satisfaction. It was exactly what the Veterinary Medical Center needed, too.

The two departments joined forces to secure a purchase order for the Vocera Communication Platform, which included the Vocera Badge and the Vocera Secure Texting application. Both departments went live with the Vocera deployment in March 2016.

Ensuring Staff Safety

Similar to Residential Life, the Veterinary Medical Center sought to improve care team communication, collaboration, and satisfaction. The hospital also needed a solution that would increase the safety of its staff. Prior to implementing Vocera technology, the hospital was using one-way pagers and push-to-talk phones. In addition to unreliable cellular connectivity, the pagers and hand-held phones made it difficult for staff to get help in serious situations with large animals.

"If one of our team members is in a stall working on a horse, and suddenly the animal pins the provider against a wall, he or she needs a reliable and fast way to call for help using their voice," said Pat Berzins, Director of Operations, University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center. "The hands-free feature of the Vocera Badge is a very valuable safety benefit for the staff."

The hospital has found the active staff directory and group calling features to be particularly useful, enabling staff to reach the right person in a particular department without needing to refer to on-call charts or duty rosters. The Vocera Badge functionality to call by name, department, or job function eliminates the need for mobile staff to remember multiple phone numbers. It has significantly cut down on communication confusion and helps ensure animals are properly triaged in a timely manner.

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“Finally, a dependable way to get a hold of someone when you really need it!” said Sheryl Ferguson, Large Animal Manager. “Our large animal isolation is in a sub-basement, and we were always struggling with communication in that area. Because Vocera can connect to Wi-Fi, it has made large animal case management safer. We can have peace-of-mind sending someone down to isolation knowing that if trouble arises, there is help with the push of a button.”

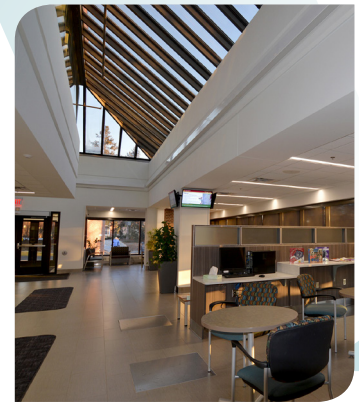
Removing Uncertainty from Communication

Within six months of deploying the Vocera Communication Platform, the hospital doubled its number of Vocera Badges throughout the facility. The Vocera Secure Texting application is being used by physicians when they are inside and outside the hospital, so they can stay connected when they aren't wearing a Vocera Badge. The secure texting solution enhances care team collaboration and integrates seamlessly with the Vocera Badge. Veterinary medicine students are able to send patient photos to physicians over the secure texting app, so they can review their animal cases when they're off campus.

“Our staff also loves the desktop interface. They can see if and when their messages have been sent, delivered, and read. In the past, we had many delayed messages with some of them not going through for one to two days. Vocera Secure Texting removes the uncertainty about whether a text message was reliably sent or just lingering out there in cyberspace,” said Ferguson.

Expanding in the Future

The University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center conducted a staff satisfaction survey after the technology was implemented, and the number one complaint was the need for more Vocera Badges. Both the Veterinary Medical Center and the Residential Life department are looking to expand the Vocera system to include more users enterprise wide.



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Sheryl Ferguson
Large Animal Manager
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